

Peaches by Pondermoniums

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Summary:

Steve indulges his interest in flowers, and plants his mom a rose garden. But when Mrs. H. hires a gardener, the cocky guy just can't stop calling Steve, "Peaches."

Peaches

Author's Note:

Catch me projecting period troubles on a Thursday~~~~~

BUT I've never written a trans character, so I hope I did him justice ♡♡

Mrs. H wants a rose garden. They actually used to have roses in the flower beds in front of the house, but life got in the way and they were replaced with plants that could handle themselves, for the most part.

Thing is, Steve *loves* flowers. He stopped letting himself indulge in them because it was hard enough being “man enough,” but his friendship with Robin (and saving the world a few times) puts things into a new perspective.

He deserves to pursue his interests. And goodness knows, anything other people have tried to push on him haven't worked apart from always making him look like a fool.

So he gets a bunch of roses in little green “trainer” pots and gets to work during one of the last winter days where it's cold in the air but hot under the sun. Steve plants peppermint (red and white striped) roses in the front flower beds, and red ones around one side of the pool; the side of the yard that slopes down and around to the front of the house, so the right angle from the street can see them. He even gets a fine mulch to blanket the new beds and goes to the quarry for free rocks to frame it all in.

Then a gardener shows up. His mom hired a freaking gardener.

Admittedly, Steve could have reacted better than, “Who the hell are you?”

But also, who arrives on their first day of work and says, “Wrong mulch, pretty boy.”

Steve had climbed out of the rose bed and faced the young and muscular guy, who blinked and his face flickered with something that Steve had seen dozens of times. The uncertainty between Steve's height and his mother's eyes and cheekbones. The movement of eyes analyzing the width of his shoulders and hips between a waistline he had worked damn hard on to be rectangular instead of hour-glass shaped.

"What's wrong with the mulch?" Steve bit out as he planted his hands on his hips. He couldn't say why he had the habit; some traumatized mixture of hiding his hips and making him look wider. Stronger. Deserving of the space he held.

"There was a recall from that brand. A whole vat of pesticide fell into it. It's too toxic for flowering or fruiting plants."

Steve could hear Robin's voice in his head. *If a man explains something to me one more time, I'm going to start frothing at the mouth.*

God, Steve loved her. She helped him see all the micro-aggressions men did to him because they mentally catalogued Steve as the wrong gender. It helped him realize how bad he was at reading people and why he'd made the wrong "friends" up until now.

"How was I supposed to know that?" he retorted grumpily.

The gardener - with his stupid face already golden in the winter, and a stupid curl falling over his forehead like he styled it for landscaping or something - smiled. "Get a rake, peach. We'll replace it by lunchtime."

Peach? Steve fumed.

So...yeah. Not the best start.

Even worse, this guy named *Billy* really fed into the pet name. Greeted him with, "Hey, peaches," all the time, and went inside to use the bathroom only to bring out sliced peaches and yogurt.

"It's finally getting hot out. Sugar's good for you."

Steve hated him. He hated him for calling him *Peach*, and he hated

him for putting salt on his fruit ever since Steve stomped inside and corrected the stupid snack the way he liked it.

And then Steve's own red rose bloomed. He despised the irony but there it was. Robin helped him despise it less and less. Her own tactics for dealing with cramps, food cravings, and headaches really saved him; and just having the company made him feel less like a fish in the wrong ocean.

It came early, though, and it was a doozy.

Steve and Billy were only weeding the beds with occasional pruning of the branches, but eventually Steve just had to lie down. He'd started bleeding that morning, but in less than twenty minutes his abdomen was swollen and he felt the cramps all the way down his inner thighs to his feet.

The grass was cool underneath his cheek. Being horizontal helped the headache but not everything else -

"Hey, Peach. Sit up a little. I got you something."

"Fluff off."

Billy...didn't laugh. Steve heard him huff through his nose and drape a towel or something over him before setting something on the grass. "Don't knock it over."

Steve opened his eyes and saw a glass of water and a glorious little pill on a toilet paper square. Steve gulped it down as fast as he could and settled once more...underneath Billy's jacket. He supposed it was still a little cold in the morning shade.

When he could, he folded the jacket and set it on the poolside concrete before going inside to get himself more water, a little coffee, and to, you know, *check* -

He'd bled through his jeans.

Like the weight of water crashing over his head, Steve wilted in the bathroom. It wasn't a big stain, but Billy had to know, right? Steve tried to remember where exactly he'd placed his jacket on top of

Steve. Was it to keep him warm, higher up on his shoulder? Or lower, to give him the courtesy of privacy?

Steve wasn't a coward. And he sure as hell wasn't going another day with this gardener treating him like-like...

Like what?

Robin would skin him alive for not wanting to be *treated like a girl. What does that even mean, Steve? Treated with respect? Treated like a person? What does it mean to be treated like a man, then? Who is devalued here?*

Steve sighed and yanked on fresh underwear and jeans. Why was gender so hard? He knew he was *Steve*, and Robin liked to tell him he over-simplified things - which was a hell of a nicer way of saying he shined less than other bulbs - but he couldn't deal with the wondering or the tip-toeing around this incredibly masculine and pretty and annoying gardener.

Billy was down the slope in the side-yard. Steve didn't know why he was planting a sapling, of all things. His mother never said anything about wanting a tree, but he ignored that and barked, "I need to talk to you."

"I'm listening," he said without turning around. Steve fumed as soil got patted down around the base of the tree.

"We need to talk about my – me. We need to talk about me."

"Are you feeling better?" Billy stood and went to the wheelbarrow of mulch.

This was too frustrating. Steve came right out with. "Do you know? Like – because my name is *Steve*. But I'm not sure you get it – "

"I get it. Steve."

Billy finally looked at him and used the shears from his belt to clip off the large tag fluttering on the branch of the tree. "It's you who doesn't get it."

He pushed the tag against the front of Steve's shirt. The latter now had a prop to syphon his frustration into. He waved the tag around as he exploded, "What do you – You don't get to know me better than –"

"Romance really flies right by you."

And.

Well.

Whatever lake or ocean Steve flailed in, he sure gaped out of water now.

Billy stepped up to him, making Steve shut his trap and swallow a wet sound. He purred in between them, "This is the part where you read the tag."

Steve really hated being a slower reader. He felt like every second was a month as he read the tag, and then flipped it over...

Peach trees have had romantic significance in many cultures for centuries. In mythology, Paris of Troy granted a golden peach to Aphrodite in competition with Hera and Athena, thereby crowning her the most beautiful. In return, Aphrodite promised him the most beautiful person in the world, Helen of Sparta.

Their fruit symbolizes unrivaled happiness, as nothing compares to the taste of a peach. In the language of flowers, peach blossoms have come to mean infatuation, or captured love.

Steve blinked at that for a long second and then found an extremely convenient little info-graphic that his brain absorbed more easily:

Peach: your qualities and charms are unequaled.

Blossoms: I am your captive.

"Um," he fumbled, because his brain was dangerously close to asking, *Are you Paris or Helen in this?*

"I've seen how you look at me."

Steve's head jerked up. "No you haven't!"

Billy, that bastard, grinned. "Yes, I have. I know you like me. You wouldn't be so mean to me otherwise."

"I'm mean because you deserve it," Steve growled, but he wasn't doing well at putting distance between them. Good god, the man had freckles on his nose and cheeks.

Billy pinched the front of Steve's shirt. "I know what else I deserve," and pulled a light little moan out of Steve when he captured his lips.

Billy's lips were soft, and his hand was a little sweaty where it came to hold the side of Steve's neck and jaw. Steve couldn't help but say against Billy's breath, "You don't mind?"

" 'Course I don't *mind*," Billy murmured almost angrily. "It's not the 1880s."

"You just relied on a plant to tell me you like me. That's pretty sappy-Victorian-show-trope to me."

"I had to get creative. You're already surrounded by roses every time I see you."

Steve giggled breathily in the little space between them. Something in his body moved like a trapeze artist when the pink tip of Billy's tongue moved inside his mouth, from one side of his bottom lip to the other.

"Roses? Too old school for me," Steve teased.

"Good. Any more old school and it'd be awkward for me to keep doing this."

Steve may or may not have gotten sunburnt from kissing too long.

Billy somehow found peach-scented sunscreen.

Steve also may or may not have thrown the bottle at him.

Author's Note:

He totally noticed because he's always staring at Steve's peaches.

*Also Paris of Troy gave Aphrodite a golden apple. Not a peach. I remembered too late while writing this and prefer peaches anyway. ~creative liberties~

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